ANNOUNCEMENT

BIOSAFETY RESEARCH IN BANGLADESH GRANTS PROGRAM

Request for Pre-Proposals Fiscal Year 2021

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Agriculture & Food Systems Institute

Contents

1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Prior to their commercialization, genetically engineered crops and their derived food/feed products are evaluated for potential adverse impacts on human health and the environment in comparison to like crops developed through more traditional breeding methods. Assessments of these risks are called for under domestic and international obligations in most countries, including Bangladesh, and typically follow well-established, science-based principles and methodologies.

Scientists in Bangladesh who are working to develop genetically engineered crops or who are engaged in evaluating the same should consider the information needed to assess potential adverse impacts to the environment in accordance with the appropriate national legislation. Environmental risk assessment of genetically engineered crops is predicated, in part, on relevant baseline information about the agro-ecology of the environment where the new crop will be deployed. The Biosafety Research in Bangladesh Grants Program has been established to support research projects designed to improve understanding of the interactions between genetically engineered crops, agricultural production and the environment in Bangladesh, as it relates to environmental risk assessment and the conservation of biodiversity.

The Biosafety Research in Bangladesh Grants Program (BRBGP) is managed by the Agriculture & Food Systems Institute (AFSI) as part of the USAID-funded South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP). The Biosafety Research in Bangladesh Grants Program recognizes the need for biosafety research as part of a broader effort to support science-based decision-making and policy development, and will fund research that considers the potential impacts of agricultural biotechnology, particularly genetically engineered crops, on the environment and biodiversity in Bangladesh.

2 PURPOSE OF THE GRANTS PROGRAM

The Biosafety Research in Bangladesh Grants Program supports research that will:

1. Strengthen the scientific basis for risk assessment in Bangladesh by addressing important research gaps so that regulatory decisions can be based on a platform of sound science;
2. Promote the development of biosafety research capacity in the public sector, which is currently limited in the country;
3. Improve the scientific knowledge base within public sector research institutes which will in turn improve the quality of science advice that is provided to regulators and decision makers;
4. Promote inter-institutional research partnerships as biosafety-related research is, by necessity, inter-disciplinary; and
5. Provide opportunities to identify, support and train talented scientists which will have positive spillovers to other areas of agricultural research and development. Some grants will be particularly targeted to early career and female scientists.

3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Up to $200,000 will be available in fiscal year 2021. Awards will range from $15,000 and $25,000 for research of one year duration. However, larger amounts could be granted if strongly justified and of sufficient significance relative to other proposals. New rounds of awards in future years are subject to availability of additional funding.

4 RESEARCH SUPPORT AREAS

The BRBGP will support laboratory, field, or literature research that will significantly advance the body of knowledge relevant to biosafety in Bangladesh priority areas. Research or activities included in (but not limited to) one of the following areas are eligible for funding:

1. Providing baseline information related to current agricultural practice in Bangladesh in order to inform future assessments of the likely use of GE plants and their potential impact. This could include:
    a. The management and use of pesticides or herbicides.
    b. Other agricultural management practices, including tillage, crop rotations etc.
    c. Characterizing the impacts and interactions of current agricultural practices on surrounding ecosystems.
2. Developing effective mechanisms to enhance risk management, including:
    a. Understanding how farmers in Bangladesh obtain and use information about agricultural management practices, in order to inform future efforts to support effective stewardship of GE plants.
3. Providing baseline information relevant to biodiversity in Bangladesh including:
    a. The presence and compatibility of wild populations of plants that are related to crop species in order to inform future assessments of the possibility and consequences of gene flow from genetically engineered plants;
    b. Characterization of arthropod abundance in and around agricultural fields in order to inform future assessment of the potential impacts of pest resistant genetically engineered plants on arthropod populations;
    c. Identifying important protected/charismatic species and characterizing their interactions with agricultural production.
4. Providing information on the effectiveness of risk management provisions, particularly around confined field trials for GE crops
    a. Testing us of spatial and reproductive isolation methods in the context of Bangladesh agriculture.

5 APPLICATION CRITERIA

5.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Projects must address biosafety research relevant to agriculture and the environment in Bangladesh. Applicants may come from public and private sector agricultural research institutions or universities in the country, or from International Agricultural Research Centers (IARCs) involved in research in Bangladesh. The pre-proposal must include at least one collaborating scientist that resides and works in Bangladesh, although this collaborator does not necessarily have to be the lead investigator.

Collaboration between research and regulatory institutions is strongly encouraged. To facilitate the capacity building component of this grant program, and to enhance the technical feasibility of the proposal, collaboration between researchers from institutions in Bangladesh and researchers in developed countries or international institutions or who otherwise have experience, expertise, and/or facilities for the type of research being proposed is also encouraged.

5.2 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must use the following criteria for preparing pre-proposals:

1. Proposed research must address the effects of genetically engineered (transgenic) crops on the environment. Studies using non-transgenic plants with traits similar to those introduced by genetic engineering may be acceptable if the study results will be relevant to the environmental risk assessment of transgenic plants;
2. Proposed research must be relevant to Bangladesh and must take place in Bangladesh;
3. Proposed research must demonstrate applicability to environmental risk assessment of transgenic plants and regulatory decision-making in Bangladesh.

6 PRE-PROPOSAL FORMAT

The pre-proposal (Summary Description of Project, Section 2 below) shall be a maximum of two (2) pages, typed, single spaced, excluding the title page, the literature cited, and the curriculum vitae.

The file must be submitted by email only, in PDF, 11 point, Times New Roman font, single line spacing. Page margins shall be 1" on all sides. Do not include any headers or footers.

The following sections must be included in the pre-proposal:

1) Title Page, containing the following:
    a. Title;
    b. Submitting institution;
    c. Lead Investigator: Name, title, contact information (including address, phone, email, and fax);
    d. Collaborating Investigators: Name, title, and address of all other collaborating investigators;
    e. Duration: Proposed start and end date for the project;
    f. Estimated TOTAL budget requested for the project.
2) Summary Description of Project, including the following:
    a. Primary goal and specific objectives;
    b. Explanation of relevance to one of the listed Research Support Areas (Part 4 above);
    c. Brief outline of methodology and experimental design, including clear hypotheses to be tested (if an experiment will be conducted);
    d. Expected outcome and outputs.
3) Literature Cited:
    a. Provide a list of citations as referenced in the summary description of the project.
4) Curriculum Vitae:
    a. Provide a curriculum vitae (one-page maximum) for the lead investigator. This should be included as the final section of the pre-proposal and not submitted as a separate file.

7 SUBMISSION OF PRE-PROPOSALS

7.1 WHEN AND WHERE TO SUBMIT

PRE-PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE SOUTH ASIA BIOSAFETY PROGRAM BY 5:00 P.M. MARCH 31, 2021 BST.

Pre-proposals must be submitted electronically to:

Mr. Sium Ahmed
Biosafety Support Officer
South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP)
C/o CIMMYT Bangladesh
House 10/B, Road 53
Gulshan 2, Dhaka 1212
Bangladesh
Tel: (+88) 01737 792464
Email: biosafetyofficedhaka@gmail.com

And copied to:

Dr. Andrew F. Roberts
Chief Executive Officer
Agriculture & Food Systems Institute
1010 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 202
Washington, DC, 20005, USA
202-204-0482
Email: aroberts@foodsystems.org

8 ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PRE-PROPOSAL

The receipt of all pre-proposals will be acknowledged by SABP via e-mail. Please ensure that the e-mail address of the principal contact for the pre-proposal is clearly identified on the title page. The acknowledgement will contain a proposal identification number. Once your proposal has been assigned a proposal number, please cite that number in all future correspondence.

9 PRE-PROPOSAL EVALUATION

9.1 EVALUATION CRITERIA

Pre-proposals will be evaluated and ranked according to the following criteria:

1) Scientific quality (50%)
    a. The questions or hypotheses to be tested have been clearly stated;
    b. The methodologies to test the hypotheses have been clearly described;
    c. The proposed methodologies are appropriate to the questions being asked;
    d. Relevant information from the literature has been cited to support the identified risk hypotheses and the proposed methodology.

2) Potential application of proposed research to the regulatory process (30%)
    a. The proposed research addresses one or more of the Research Support Areas listed;
    b. The experimental design or research methodology is likely to provide information that will be directly applicable to a regulatory decision;
    c. The proposed research will be useful to policy-makers in the near term;
    d. The proposed research will build capacity to make science-based regulatory decisions in Bangladesh.
3) Preferred collaborators (20%)
    a. Early career and female researchers in Bangladesh;
    b. Researchers from more than one institution in Bangladesh;
    c. Researches from public research and regulatory institutions in Bangladesh;
    d. Researchers from IARCs;
    e. Collaborators with some experience in risk assessment research.

Pre-proposals that identify multiple preferred collaborators will be more successful than those that do not.

9.2 PRE-PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Pre-proposals will be evaluated against the criteria in Section 9.1 (above) by SABP and AFSI personnel. Additional personnel involved with the Biosafety Research in Bangladesh Grants Program may also review the pre-proposals.

9.3 NOTICE TO ADVANCE TO A FULL PROPOSAL

Pre-proposals that are selected for advancement to the full proposal stage will be announced on April 30, 2021. Applicants will be notified of this decision by email. Full proposals must be submitted by no later than May 31, 2021.

10 PROGRAMMATIC CONTACTS

For additional information on the program, please contact:

Mr. Sium Ahmed
Biosafety Support Officer
South Asia Biosafety Program (SABP)
C/o CIMMYT Bangladesh
House 10/B, Road 53
Gulshan 2, Dhaka 1212
Bangladesh

Tel: (+88) 01737 792464
Email: biosafetyofficedhaka@gmail.com

or

Dr. Andrew F. Roberts
Chief Executive Officer
Agriculture & Food Systems Institute
1010 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 202
Washington, DC, 20005, USA

Tel: (+1) 202-204-0482
Email: aroberts@foodsystems.org

11 ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS

This request for pre-proposals does not commit the AFSI to award a grant, to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of an application to this request, or to procure or contract for services or supplies. AFSI reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received as a result of this request, or negotiate with all qualified sources, to waive any informalities or minor irregularities in applications/ proposals, or to cancel in part or in its entirety the request for pre-proposals if AFSI determines that it is in the best interest of the project. AFSI is not required to award a grant to the lowest bidder or to the best score, but will base any award decisions on the best overall proposal considering all relevant factors, including scientific merit, likely public benefit, price, technical qualifications, demonstrated experience, etc.

A successful grant recipient will be required to enter into a written contract specifying the terms on which the work will be performed. Those terms will include, but not be limited to, provisions that effectuate the following principles:

1. Agriculture & Food Systems Institute (AFSI) will not indemnify the grant recipient against any claims, losses, or damages arising from or relating to the project;
2. The grant recipient shall indemnify AFSI against claims, losses, and damages arising from the negligence, breach of contract, or intentional misconduct of the grant recipient;
3. The grant recipient shall not infringe any intellectual property rights in the course of performing the work;
4. Scientific information relating to the grant recipient's work shall be made publicly available.